

TRANSITION OUTCOMES PROJECTS

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BACKGROUND AND NEED

While a great deal has occurred in states and local districts to improve transition services for youth with disabilities, there are many states and local districts that continue to find difficulty in meeting the transition services requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is believed that much of this is due to a number of factors, including a lack of understanding of the requirements and a lack of knowledge of how to address both the mandate and intent of the legislation. Simply put, teachers and administrators are asking for direction and information that will tell them “what” they must do and then, with examples, show them clearly and concisely “how” to plan for, develop, and implement transition services for youth with disabilities.

The Transition Outcomes Project is developed around a process, model and conceptual framework designed to identify specific problems in implementing the transition services requirements and then develop strategies to address and resolve each problem. The process begins with the gathering of baseline information from IEPs of students 14 years of age and older. The baseline information pinpoints specific problem areas for each of the transition services requirements. Following the gathering of baseline data, a team of individuals from the state, Regional Resource Center and the local district come together to discuss the findings from the reviews, set target goals and timelines as well as identify specific interventions and strategies designed to address each requirement problem area. District staffs then begin to implement and put into place each of the strategies and interventions. On-going technical assistance is provided to staff approximately every 6 to 8 weeks to determine the success of the interventions and identify alternative strategies if needed. At the end of the time period (generally, one year) another review of the same IEP files is conducted with the results being compared to the initial baseline findings. Differences between the initial baseline data are noted to determine the changes and/or improvements. The specific interventions and strategies are also identified and recorded along with personal reactions and comments on the changes that have occurred from district staff.

PURPOSE OF THE TRANSITION OUTCOME PROJECTS

The purpose of the Transition Outcome Projects is to:

1. Assist local districts in meeting the transition service requirements of IDEA 1997.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of providing and delivering transition services to students and families through the IEP.
3. Provide training and resource materials on the transition process for educators, administrators, adult agency personnel, parents and others.
4. Improve the post school outcomes of students with disabilities.
5. Develop a model and process for meeting the transition requirements and identify strategies/interventions that work and can be replicated and implemented in a variety of states and districts.

PLAN AND RATIONALE

This proposed plan would focus on measurable results that are consistent with IDEA '97 transition requirements and improve the post school outcomes of students with disabilities.

The proposed approach is:

- Review IEPs of transition age students to determine problem or deficit areas with the transition requirements of IDEA '97.
- Identify, with local district staff, strategies, interventions and an implementation plan with specific measurable targets that will directly address the problem or deficit areas.
- Provide follow along with building staff to assist in implementing the strategies/interventions and implementation plan.
- Involve local district and state personnel (administration, teachers, etc.) in all phases of the project
- Evaluate and report on the changes, improvements, activities, and strategies.

PLAN OF ACTION AND ACTIVITIES:

Development of Evaluation Instruments and Procedures

1. Develop evaluation instrument that can be used to determine the extent with which all transition requirements under IDEA are being met by local districts [Completed].
2. Develop process and procedures for determining student pool and procedures for conducting IEP evaluations for initial baseline.

Review Team Training

1. Identify and train evaluation team members on the instrument, process and procedures.

Selection and Team Visits of Districts

1. Evaluation Team members schedule, meet with district personnel and complete reviews of IEPs of students 14 years of age and older on all transition requirements.
2. Compile, analyze and summarize findings.

Developing Strategies/Interventions and Implementation Plans

1. Meet with local district building and IEP team members to report findings from the IEP review.
2. State and Regional Resource Center staff and members of the evaluation team meet with staff from LEA buildings to report findings, develop strategies/interventions, set target goals, set timelines for implementation and final reviews and schedules for follow-up visits.

Implementation and Follow-Along

1. Local education agencies implement the strategies, interventions, skills and knowledge obtained from the review meeting/training to address deficit and target areas.
2. Follow-along by state Regional Resource Center personnel during the implementation stage to help districts implement the strategies, interventions, skills, knowledge, and procedures or identify alternative interventions/strategies if needed.

Evaluation, Refinement and Development of Next Steps

1. Formal follow-up reviews of IEPs to determine improvement and proximity in meeting target goals. The exact timeline or schedule is determined for each district by district staff.
2. Meet with staff from local districts to report final results and discuss next steps.
3. Review of overall results by state personnel to develop “next steps” for expanded training, implementation and replication.

SOME FINAL RESULTS FROM THE WYOMING PILOT DISTRICT

Currently the three pilot districts in Wyoming are the only place where this project has both baseline and final data one year later. The three districts in Wyoming were initially selected by the state department to represent different demographics across the state (large, medium, and small size district). After contacting the districts each district volunteered to be a part of the project. Teams of reviewers were trained on the project and the use of the Transition Checklist. Reviewers then went into the districts to review IEP files on the transition requirements of students 14 years of age and older. Following the compilation of the baseline results, meetings were scheduled and held with staff in the buildings in each district. The purpose of that meeting was to share results from the baseline reviews, set target goals, identify strategies/interventions to achieve their target goals and set the timeline for implementation and when the final review would be conducted. Both the baseline and final results are reported as percentages for each of the transition services requirements. Improvement was demonstrated with each of the requirements during the 12 months the project was being implemented. Some of the results include:

- Inviting other agencies to attend the IEP meeting when transition will be discussed went from a baseline average of 10% to 67% in twelve months across the three districts.
- The inclusion of a “statement of transition service needs” that focuses on a course of study went from a baseline average of 40% to 94% in twelve months across the three districts.
- The development and writing of the “statement of needed transition services” with a “coordinated set of activities” went from a baseline average of 21% to 80% in twelve months across the three districts.

Much of the improvements were believed to be due to and number of factors such as:

- The design and approach of the process.
- Having districts own the problem as well as the solutions where they decided on target goals, identified the strategies they felt were necessary in order to obtain their target goals, and empowering staff to make necessary changes in order to achieve results
- Clear and concise descriptions and examples of “what” to do and “how” to implement each requirement.
- On-going follow-along and communication with district staff.

Follow-along was a part of the process and included short meetings with staff every 6 to 8 weeks to check on progress as well as on-going IEP file reviews and feedback to staff. In Wyoming this project was expanded to all districts across Wyoming during the 1999/2000 school year. Currently Wyoming has baseline data on the transition requirements for all students’ 14 years of age and older (approximately 1,700 students).